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## COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN SPAIN DURING ANCIENT AND MEDIAEVAL TIMES

In the absence of very definite records the earliest history of Spanish commerce and industry remains a subject for speculation and inference. As far back as twenty and thirty centuries before Christ, some manner of trade and commerce seems to have existed in what is at the present date the Spanish peninsula.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, nothing approaching definiteness in this regard until nearly ten centuries before the Christian era, when it was recorded that King Solomon's "ships went to Tarshish . . . every three years once . . . bringing gold and silver."<sup>2</sup> The same chronicle speaks of another king of Judea who for some iniquity was by the act of God frustrated in his plans of an expedition to Tarshish.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps of greater importance were the Phoenician merchants who first opened the trade of the Mediterranean sea and visited the Spanish provinces most frequently.<sup>4</sup> They are said to have taken possession of what is now western Andalusia in the tenth century B.C., and there is little doubt of their having explored the coasts of the Spanish peninsula during the later centuries. It is true that the Phoenician merchants of this period were primarily engaged in piracy, but they were not satisfied by capturing men and merchandise only. They established trading-posts and warehouses at Algeciras, Malaga, Cadiz, and Seville and named the peninsula *Span* or *Spania*, which means hidden.<sup>5</sup>

The Phoenicians, like the agents of the Judean rulers, visited the shores of Spain for the gold, silver, copper, and tin that were found there. According to Diodorus it was this abundance of gold and silver that furnished Carthage with the sinews of war against Rome at a later period.<sup>6</sup> But the precious metals were by no means the sole products of Spain. Wine, wool, cloth, and

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *Historia de Espana*, I, 67.

<sup>2</sup> II Chron. 9:21.

<sup>3</sup> II Chron. 20:36.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. 17:12. (Cf. Huet, *History of Commerce*, p. 132; Freeman, *History of Sicily*, I, 239.)

<sup>5</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Huet, *op. cit.*

linen, the latter of which was manufactured in Spain first, were among her chief exports. Honey, wax, salt fish, oil, and pickles were other commodities supplied by Spain. Aside from the fertility of her soil, Spain offered the invaders commodious ports, harbors, and navigable rivers along which they established a number of trading-posts.<sup>1</sup> Trade was carried on at this time by barter; but with the discovery of the rich gold and silver mines in Spain the Phoenicians introduced a system of coinage which greatly facilitated commerce.

The commercial history of Spain during this early period is thus more or less conjectural. Not until the centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ, when Rome ultimately triumphed over Carthage, are there any data regarding commercial Spain. By supplanting the dominion of Carthage in the peninsula, Rome fell heir to all the wealth of the country. Aside from the precious metals which were always to be considered the most valuable of Spain's products, Rome imported wheat, wine, wool, fruits, oil, honey, wax, dyes, salt, pitch, oysters, pork, cured hams, and horses.<sup>2</sup>

Like a good steward Rome improved her opportunities. In the rich fertile valleys of Guadalquivir and Guadiana in southern Spain, the culture of the vine, the olive, fruits, and grain was encouraged. In the more arid regions of central Spain sheep- and cattle-raising proved to be the most profitable occupation. In spite of a temporary prohibition on wine production, for the purpose of allowing Italy a monopoly of this trade, the Romans introduced several species of the vine into Spain and as a result we have the famous vines of Falerno, Beleaes, and Jerez.<sup>3</sup>

Nor were manufactures and mining entirely neglected by the enterprising Romans. Sheep-raising on an extensive scale led to the manufacture of woolens, and the cultivation of flax supplied linen. As for mining, the mines of Almira and Cartagena abounded in silver and lead; those of Huelva and Galicia were noted for their copper and tin production respectively, while gold,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Huet, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, *History of Commerce* p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 127. *Jerez* gives us the *sherry* wine.

silver, and cinnabar came from Andalusia. Some idea of the extent of the mining industry may be gathered from the fact that in the second century B.C. there were no less than 40,000 miners in Cartagena alone.<sup>1</sup>

Such a wealth of agricultural and mineral products, not to mention manufactures, afforded a rather substantial foundation for an extensive commerce with the outside world. Consequently we find a very active trade between the Roman colonies in Spain and Africa, Italy, and France. Although the land routes were more frequently used at this time, yet a considerable number of merchant ships carried on a lucrative commerce along the Mediterranean coast and in the interior towns along the navigable rivers, as Seville on Guadalquivir.<sup>2</sup>

Of sufficient consequence for the development of commerce at this time was the institution of a postal system established by Augustus. It was, however, an exclusive concern intended solely for the use of the nobility and the upper classes in society, although it was supported by public taxation. Nevertheless, as society was then constituted, commerce very often found her patrons among the élite of the community, and thus the postal service was of decided advantage in commercial intercourse. Later, Hadrian extended the service so as to include all classes and supported it as before by general taxation.<sup>3</sup>

With the Visigothic invasion and domination of Spain in the early decades of the fifth century, commerce and industry, generally, received a serious check. Perhaps no industry suffered from the conquest so much as agriculture. For upon entering Spain, the conquerors seized a large part of the fields and houses and dispossessed the individual proprietors.<sup>4</sup> In the course of a short time, there were founded the *latifundia*, worked by slaves or serfs. It was precisely this landed proprietorship giving rise to a large servile class that made it impossible for the Visigoths to stem the tide of the Moslem onslaught in the eighth century.<sup>5</sup>

The change in the system of agriculture thus brought about left

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394.

the invaders free to indulge in the exciting business of constant warfare. Commerce and industry occupied their attention still less than agriculture. In fact, but for the few Jews, Greeks, and Romans who had survived the barbarian invasion, commerce would have probably vanished from the peninsula. These peoples still succeeded in carrying on some trade with the Levant by means of Spanish vessels. The production of silks, wool, oil, iron, and the manufacture of arms and the building of ships still survived from the Roman times. Another institution of the Roman period which persisted with undiminished vigor was the gild system in the various trades. The distinction between journeymen and apprentices continued vigorously and unless an artisan could establish his claim in one or the other of these classes he was barred from the unimpeded practice of his own profession.<sup>1</sup>

Before passing on to the overthrow of the Visigothic supremacy in Spain by the Arabs, some observations, by way of digression, upon the part played by the Jews in the successive conquests of Spain by the Visigoths and then by the Arabs may not be entirely amiss.

Sufferance, it is true, has ever been the badge of the Israelite, but he has not been altogether a passive agent, nor has his loyalty to the cardinal virtue of non-resistance been consistent. The Jews of Spain under the Roman rule were hated bitterly by the Catholic Christians. Their trade and industry were hampered by special laws and regulations. If any protection at all was afforded them by the rulers of the colonies, it was only to save them for exploitation. This state of affairs continued for some time until it reached a climax during the latter part of the fourth century. The Jews, being driven to desperation, were only too glad to admit the barbarian host under Atawulf in the hope of escaping the Catholic persecution.<sup>2</sup> Precisely this same course was pursued in later years by the Roman subjects in Africa who, chafing under the yoke of Rome, invited the Vandals to overthrow the Roman power.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208-10.

<sup>2</sup> Villamil, "The Jews in Early Spanish History," *Catholic World*, LIV, 86.

The Jews enjoyed some degree of freedom under the Visigothic rule. They carried on their business transactions and loaned out money at interest without molestation. This happy state, however, came to an end when the barbarian conquerors, dazzled by the culture and civilization of Catholic Rome and eager to emulate the Roman manner of life, embraced Catholicism. The persecution of the Jews was revived and kept up relentlessly. Under these circumstances, "the Jews acted like the false mother before the judgment seat of Solomon" and, rather than endure the success of their rivals, the Catholics, threw open the country to the Arab hordes, who had been engaged in the conquest of Africa,<sup>1</sup> and were now preparing to invade Spain.

The first effect of the Moslem ascendancy in Spain was to break up the *latifundia* into small holdings and to distribute them among the soldiers and allies. The Arabs, who had been for the most part a nomadic people and untutored in the art of agriculture, in a short while proved to be efficient yeomen. By far the most successful agriculturists were the apostate Arabs.

Under the wise administration of the Mohammedan caliphs agriculture, commerce, and industry received fresh impetus. The gradual emergence of a small proprietary class in society, as a result of the new system of land tenure, tended to bring about a degree of security and stability of business not enjoyed upon the peninsula since the days of the Roman rule.<sup>2</sup>

Spanish agriculture profited furthermore by the addition, to an already long list of products, of many new varieties of fruits and vegetables which the Arabs brought with them. Of the most important were rice, sugar cane, and the pomegranate.<sup>3</sup> Even the culture of the vine flourished and spread over the land in spite of the Islamic scruples against the worship of Bacchus and the harsh decrees of the caliphs against the setting-out of new vineyards. In the arid regions of central Spain large flocks of sheep were raised, furnishing the raw material for manufactures of woollens. Cordova, Malaga, and Almira were famous for their

<sup>1</sup> Villamie, *op. cit.*, pp. 360 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Nys, *Économie politique*, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 264.

silk and wool manufactures. At one time Cordova alone harbored 13,000 textile workers.<sup>1</sup>

Almira was noted also for her manufactures of glass, iron, and bronze vases which were richly decorated with artistic designs. Murcia, Seville, Almira, Toledo, Granada, and above all Cordova were the large industrial and commercial centers of Mohammedan Spain. These cities and their surrounding regions carried on a most profitable trade with the rest of the world, receiving goods of every description in exchange for the famous leathers of Cordova,<sup>2</sup> arms of Toledo, draperies of Murcia, rich silks of Granada, and the various agricultural products of other regions.<sup>3</sup> The Jews, too, who had been more or less disturbed in the pursuit of their vocation, became now the foremost merchants. The ports of Cadiz and Seville were repaired and enlarged to make room for the increasing volume of commerce. Barcelona opened her ports to the ships of Pisa and Genoa which came from the Levant laden with merchandise.<sup>4</sup> The return cargo of these ships consisted of cotton, olive trees, oil, raisins, figs, which surpassed the product of all other countries, saffron, wines, aromatic herbs, marble, and precious stones. These goods were carried to some port on the African coast whence they proceeded on the caravan routes to the Orient; or the ships thus laden went direct to Egypt and Constantinople, thence to the Euxine Sea and up the Don, then down the Volga River through Transcaspia. From Egypt the Spanish merchants imported women and slaves. There was also some communication between the Moslems and Byzantium, owing to the frequent pilgrimages which the former made to Mecca, Bagdad, and Damascus.<sup>5</sup> The gold, silver, and copper mines, which must never be lost sight of in any discussion of Spanish commerce, afforded the richest source of wealth. Some of the mines were worked by individuals for their private gain, while many others were owned by the caliphs and worked for the profit of the Moslem rulers.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> *Cordoban*, from which we derive *cordwain*, is the Spanish word for highly finished leather. The origin of the word is unmistakable.

<sup>3</sup> Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Noel, *Histoire du commerce du monde*, I, 145.

<sup>5</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 266.

This progress in commerce and industry was the basis of the growth of a large and prosperous population under the Mohammedan domination. Cordova, which was one of the most populous and wealthy cities in Spain, was unsurpassed by any in the world in pomp and splendor. In the last century of the Moslem occupation under Abderrahman III, Cordova contained some 200,000 houses, 600 mosques, 900 baths, elaborate water conduits, public fountains and parks, and magnificent palaces. The public revenue had risen from something like \$800,000 during the reign of Abderrahman I to approximately \$13,000,000 under Abderrahman III.<sup>1</sup>

In Leon and Asturias, the chief Christian provinces in Spain, economic conditions were not so prosperous as in Mohammedan Spain. Life and property were less safe, because of the weakened condition of the Christian rulers. The only exception to the occupation of constant warfare which engaged the attention of the Christians was to be found in the occasional tilling of the soil, sporadic sheep-raising, and the intermittent pursuit of a few of the more indispensable industries. Galicia on the northern coast of Spain, owing to her isolated position and her proximity to the sea, developed a certain amount of commerce. Being a rendezvous of pilgrims from all parts of the world, this province grew in wealth and population. Hotels and banking houses were erected for the accommodation of the travelers. Owing to the peculiar mission of these tourists, however, there developed the manufacture of sacred emblems and images. Santiago became the center of this trade, and as most of the workshops were controlled by the archbishops they secured a monopoly of the trade by forbidding such trade to be carried on outside the city.<sup>2</sup>

Commerce in general was hampered in many ways. On the one hand there was the ever-present fear of Moslem and Norman invasions; on the other, there was the seigniorial interference with trade, together with heavy taxes and tolls of every conceivable nature, such as bridge dues, tonnage, and anchorage.

Agriculture was in a measure fostered by the monasteries and

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, p. 262. (Abderrahman I began his rule in 756, Abderrahman III in 912. The latter's rule marked the zenith of Moslem supremacy in Spain.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.



by the enactment of a law giving complete title to any piece of land to anyone who would bring it under cultivation. But these measures were of little avail in the face of frequent depredations of the fields by the Moslem hordes, on the one hand, and heavy taxation of the land and the annoying feudal dues, on the other. Owing to these unfortunate conditions, the populace for the most part led a wretched life and often fell victim to famine and pestilence.<sup>1</sup>

It must not be supposed, of course, that perfect peace and tranquillity ruled the Moslem empire. The Christian chiefs and princes were restive and often engaged the Moslems in battle in the hope of recovering their lands by driving the Mohammedans from Spain. The first decisive blow was struck the Moslem rule in 1085, when the Christians under the valiant leader Alfonso VI captured Toledo. From this date onward the Christians began steadily to gain ground from the Moors. With the union of Leon and Castile in the beginning of the eleventh century, Christian Spain extended to Andalusia and brought the Moorish principalities into a state of vassalage.

In course of time peace was established, only to be broken somewhat frequently by petty civil feuds. In general, however, there was substantial personal security and a certain degree of guaranty against the exactions of the nobles and the attacks of robbers. At the same time the emancipation of the servile class and the attachment of families to the soil with a degree of independence improved the economic situation and encouraged labor and industry. As a rule, only the arable lands could be appropriated by individuals or families. The forests, pastures, and unbroken lands were held by the municipality and enjoyed by the entire community. In some rare instances the lands under cultivation also belonged to the community. Whenever this was the case, the lands were apportioned to the members of the community annually, either directly or by allotment. The *Fueros*<sup>2</sup> of the time were very strict in regard to keeping such fields intact. Among other inducements especially favoring agriculture were land grants to those who

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> *Fueros* is the term applied to the laws.

undertook to bring under cultivation new lands; exemption of the tillers of the soil from taxation and military service; security of property rights; digging of wells for irrigation purposes, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Equally important with agriculture was the cattle industry. Horses, asses, sheep, goats, and hogs were raised in the less fertile regions of Spain and very frequently they were allowed to wander over cultivated fields to the grave prejudice of the farmers. This ill-advised practice gave rise frequently to bitter feuds between the farmers and cattle-raisers.<sup>2</sup>

Commerce and industry developed a little more slowly. With the exception of Santiago there were perhaps no great centers of industry. Galicia, Leon, and Castile at this time scarcely produced enough to supply the ordinary needs of the inhabitants. In general, the inference to be drawn from the laws of this time is that there were scarcely any trades. The *Fueros* of certain provinces, however, reveal exceptions. For instance, blacksmithing, carpentry, weaving, and gold and silver smithing are mentioned in the laws of Salamanca, Plasencia, and Moliva. The code of San Sebastian given by the king of Navarre in 1180 speaks of iron, wool, and wine exportations.<sup>3</sup>

Foreign commerce also was at a low ebb. Probably the only important commercial city was Barcelona. While Leon and Castile were fighting the Moslems, "the burghers of Barcelona were sailing the seas in quest of commerce and adventure and emulating the civilization of the East."<sup>4</sup> They entered into commercial treaties with foreign powers and succeeded in making trade and travel safe by ridding the Spanish coasts of the Moorish pirates.<sup>5</sup>

This decline in commerce and industry, consequent upon the destruction of the Mussulman caliphates at the hands of the Almoravides and Almohades,<sup>6</sup> and upon the conquest by the Christians, was only temporary. For with the gradual ascendancy of the Christians, commerce and industry revived with increasing

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 495.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>4</sup> Burke, *A History of Spain*, I, 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>6</sup> These were barbarian fanatics who came from Africa and swept over the Moslem empire in Spain in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

vigor. The thirteenth century was a period of great material development in the entire peninsula. There are facts indicating the early beginnings of commercial relations between Castile and Flanders and Germany.<sup>1</sup> Galicia, Aragon, Navarre, and some of the eastern provinces also began to trade with Europe and England. The trade of these distant districts went for the most part by way of Navarre through the Bay of Biscay. This route was chosen for the obvious reason that the outlet on the western coast was barred by Portugal, and the outlets on the east and south by the Moors and Mohammedans. The chief exports of these provinces were mercury, leather, wool, and wine, the latter of which was very highly prized in Europe.

In southern Spain, Seville assumed commercial importance especially under Ferdinand III. He encouraged trade by every means, particularly by extending freedom of trade to foreign merchants and by appointing a financial agent to facilitate commercial exchanges among the traders of various nations. Ferdinand III also established dockyards in Seville for the building of merchant vessels, thus laying the foundation for the Spanish merchant marine which was destined to play a conspicuous part in later history.<sup>2</sup> In the interior of the country the merchants were still annoyed in their trade by personal insecurity during travel and by numerous tolls and taxes which were exacted from them by the nobles. The kings tried, at various intervals, to remove these obstacles in the way of commerce by military aid and by the institution of fairs and markets under governmental supervision, but with little success. Nor must the fact be passed by unnoticed that the use of money as a medium of exchange assisted trade very materially. With the expansion of international commerce, money came to be an indispensable tool of exchange and circulated freely at markets, fairs, and large centers of production. The coins of various nations were made available also by taxes paid by the merchants and by the tributes levied upon the conquered Moors.<sup>3</sup>

As for the trades, they were organized very much after the manner of the Roman *collegia*, being independent political units with their proper government, treasury, seal, flag, and religious

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 500 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 502.

patron. These corporations grew in political power and became formidable social factors, seldom failing to procure for themselves special privileges and valuable franchises, often to the prejudice of public welfare.<sup>1</sup> They carried on domestic manufactures with scrupulous care as to the quality and quantity of goods produced. To guard against fraud and deceit in the making of goods, they had special inspectors whose duty it was to exercise careful scrutiny over the production of commodities. The trades were segregated, one particular trade often occupying a single street or district; hence the existence of many localities at the present day whose names have been derived from the trades which at one time happened to be established there.

Turning now to the eastern coast of Spain, it is to be noted that the provinces of Aragon and Catalonia were not far behind Leon and Castile in economic progress. The system of land tenure which obtained in these provinces was much the same as that which prevailed in other Christian provinces. The export trade which flowed through Navarre included wine, olive oil, wheat, rice, and saffron from Aragon and Catalonia. Most of the agricultural products were sent to Flanders.<sup>2</sup> But owing to the comparative barrenness of the soil in these eastern provinces, more attention was given to sheep- and cattle-raising than to cultivation. Consequently the manufacture of cloth and the tanning of leather became important industries, if not the natural industries of this region. The extent of the leather industry may be inferred from the fact that a street in one of the Catalan cities was called *Pelleceria*.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the poor quality of her soil, however, Catalonia succeeded in developing the vine culture quite extensively. Valencia, thanks to an elaborate system of irrigation, was more successful in agriculture, and, owing to the industrial genius of the Moors, she manufactured woolens, cottons, silks, paper, cordage, brass, and earthenware.<sup>4</sup> Emulating her neighboring rivals, the Italian

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 498.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 545 ff. From *Pelleceria* is derived the modern Spanish word *pellejeria*, meaning "leather worker's shop."

<sup>4</sup> The Spanish word *fustanes*, meaning a "cotton cloth," has probably been derived from the Arabic word *fustan*, meaning a "woman's dress." Similarly, the Spanish word *cordeleria*, meaning "cordage," is derived from the Arabic *cordela*, "a ribbon."

republics, Catalonia succeeded by the middle of the thirteenth century in adding glass, linen, woolens, silks, and woodenware to her list of manufactures.

If not in agriculture and industry, at least in foreign commerce the supremacy of eastern Spain is beyond all peradventure. Either by way of the northern route (through the Bay of Biscay by way of Navarre) or through Barcelona, Aragon could send her ships to Flanders, England, and Germany. In case of emergency still a third route was open to her—the southern route by way of the River Ebro through the port of Tortosa.

It was at this period, too, and especially during the reign of James I of Aragon, which covered the greater part of the thirteenth century (1213–76), that Catalonia reached the zenith of her commercial development. The port of Barcelona was thrown open to the commerce of the world. It was frequented by merchants from Pisa, Genoa, Sicily, Syria, France, and England. At the time of the rule of James of Aragon, Barcelona rivaled Venice and Montpellier as a great commercial center. The Catalan merchants were quite able to hold their own against the merchants of Italy in the competition for the carrying trade of the Levant.<sup>1</sup> The commercial and industrial importance of Barcelona may be gathered from the fact that in 1258 the City Council contained 114 representatives from the various trades.<sup>2</sup>

In 1227, James I, seeing the growing importance of the trade with Egypt and the Barbary coast, enacted what in modern terminology would be called navigation laws. He restricted the carrying trade between Barcelona and these countries exclusively to the Catalan merchant ships. Within a decade the trade had increased so greatly that additional harbor accommodations were necessary. At the same time piracy had grown to be so profit-

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 548.

<sup>2</sup> Swift, *James the First of Aragon*, p. 225. The list includes: six cloth-merchants, four money-changers, eight druggists and apothecaries, nine wool-dealers, nine tanners, eleven mattress-makers, four harness-makers, three brass-founders, six purse-makers, eight saddlers, two armorers, five shoemakers, four wax-weavers, two dyers, three tailors, two crossbow-makers, four smiths, four carpenters, two potters, four coopers, three masons, four cotton-spinners, one leather-dresser, two hucksters, two gardeners, two auctioneers.

able and therefore so persistent that James was obliged to establish a coast guard to protect the merchants against the marauding expeditions of the Moorish and Christian pirates.<sup>1</sup>

By far the largest trade was with the Italians and more particularly with Genoa, which at this time was perhaps the most important trading city on the Mediterranean. By a treaty concluded between James and the Italian traders in 1230, the latter were permitted to visit the Spanish kingdom and carry on trade "with freedom and security" and without paying tolls or harbor dues. In return for these privileges, the Genoese gave similar rights to the subjects of James.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding many serious frictions between these rival traders, both countries grew in wealth and power through commerce. Eventually, however, James's dominion was so overrun by foreign traders that he was compelled to banish them. At one time he ordered the expulsion of "all Lombards, Florentines, Sienians, and Luccans." In 1268 all strangers were forbidden to engage in banking business in Barcelona or to load foreign ships with native merchandise.<sup>3</sup>

Trade with Egypt, Palestine, and Syria grew in weight and tale to such a degree that in 1272 Barcelona was permitted to have consulates established at Alexandria for the administration of justice to James's subjects trading in Egypt.<sup>4</sup> James established a factory in Tunis which he leased to the merchants for a term of years and for which he received liberal compensation. In the course of time a regular commercial code (*Libro del Consulado del Mar*) was developed for the regulation of trade relations among the European nations.

In regard to internal commerce the frequent concessions of air and market privileges are sufficient evidences of a brisk local trade.<sup>5</sup>

The chief exports were wheat, flour, wine, raisins, honey, fruits, saffron, salt, lead, iron, and steel arms. Wool was the chief export of Barcelona. The manufacturing centers were Genoa, Tortosa, and Perpignan. In exchange for these products, the

<sup>1</sup> Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, I, 549.

provinces imported pepper, ginger, indigo for dyeing cloth, silk, sugar, and incense.<sup>1</sup>

The trades were organized into gilds. They were especially strong in Valencia and Barcelona. For the most part, however, they were under governmental supervision and seldom enjoyed any political independence as did those of the southern provinces.<sup>2</sup> Nor were the trades and industry free from obstacles. Private warfare and papal restrictions on the trade with the Saracens caused no small annoyance to the merchants and artisans.<sup>3</sup> In addition to social difficulties with which commerce had to contend, there were the more burdensome political obstructions in the way of trade. With the exception of a few cities which for a time enjoyed a reasonable degree of freedom from heavy taxation, the pressing hand of the toll-gatherer fell quite uniformly over every city in James's dominion. The king of Aragon levied high duties on all imports of wheat, corn, cloth, etc., and prohibited the exportation of wheat without the royal license. This excessive taxation is to be explained partly by the inability of the majority of people to pay taxes and partly because of the heavy indebtedness of James, who often pledged the revenues of the kingdom and pawned his jewels to meet the claims of his creditors.<sup>4</sup>

In his attempt to bring about reforms in trade, James tried to fix the price of corn and other commodities, and forbade the combination of merchants for the purpose of raising prices. He established for the Jews the uniform rate of interest at 20 per cent, "to curb their insatiable avarice," while he forbade his officials "to compel Christians to pay usury to Christians."<sup>5</sup>

During his long reign James I succeeded in advancing both commerce and industry in northeastern Spain. This commercial expansion was carried farther by his immediate successors. An episode which occurred shortly after the death of James aided Spain's commercial development very materially. This incident

<sup>1</sup> Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 441.

<sup>3</sup> Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 230. In 1229 a provincial council excommunicated all those who sold arms and horses to the Moors. Finally in 1274 the popes induced James to forbid by royal decree the conveyance of arms, iron, lead, etc., to Saracen countries.—*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

was the massacre of Sicilian Vespers in 1282, due, largely, to the political intrigues and machinations of Europe which culminated in the acquisition of Sicily by Aragon. The French rule in the island under Charles of Anjou was disliked to the point of irritation. The Sicilians were, therefore, ready to revolt upon the slightest pretext. The opportunity for an open rebellion was seized when on Easter Monday, 1282, a French officer offered an insult to a woman. The entire native population rose in arms and on that day massacred upward of four thousand men. Fearing the vengeance of Charles of Anjou, the Sicilians, to protect themselves, offered the crown of the island kingdom to Peter III of Aragon, who had the semblance of a claim to Sicily through his marriage to Constance of the house of Hohenstaufen in Naples.<sup>1</sup> In this manner the house of Aragon came into the possession of Sicily and as a consequence of this the Aragonese obtained effective control over the Levantine commerce.

By the end of the thirteenth century and during the early decades of the fourteenth, commerce and industry had assumed a substantial degree of stability. Internal commerce especially acquired greater importance. Thus we find Alfonso X establishing two annual fairs in Seville, each of thirty days' duration, and a third at Murcia lasting fifteen days. Valladolid and Segovia, as also Medina del Campo, which was centrally located between northern and northwestern Spain, became national trading-centers.<sup>2</sup> But now as formerly, though perhaps less frequently, personal insecurity along the highways and civil wars proved to be disturbing elements in the way of commerce. A more serious source of confusion was the occasional revival of the Jewish persecutions which often threatened to destroy the economic organization of society. Added to these as causes of industrial disorder was the anarchy which reigned with regard to the media of exchange and weights and measures. In many of the trading-centers coins of all nations and provinces were to be found circulating. As a consequence of this lack of uniformity in currency the evil of clipping and debasement of coins became a common practice. Nor did the penalty

<sup>1</sup> Lodge, *The Close of the Middle Ages*, pp. 24, 479.

<sup>2</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 217.



of death by burning deter the people from this course. Very often even the kings resorted to coin debasement as the readiest means for paying their debts or increasing their revenues. In regard to weights and measures, Alfonso X tried to improve the situation by applying the weights and measures of some of the cities to certain commodities, and those of other places to certain other products; e.g., the yard measure of Castile was applied to cloth, while bread and wine were weighed and measured by the standards of Toledo.<sup>1</sup>

Considerable attention was given to public works such as the improvement of harbors and highways for the benefit of commerce. The most notable improvement in this direction was the building of river bridges which were of great economic consequence. The trade of ferrying people and products across the streams was a lucrative one and had been enjoyed exclusively by the clergy and the nobility. With the erection of bridges the enormous profits from this trade disappeared. Hence there was aroused among the nobles very strong opposition to bridge-building.<sup>2</sup>

No less marked was the progress in foreign commerce. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the Catalonians had obtained a footing in Famagosta and with the merchants of Narbonne, and Provençal enjoyed the privilege of free port entry. A few years later they obtained a *fondaco* in Marseilles.<sup>3</sup> The Catalonians had earlier obtained trading-posts in Italy. In 1335 they were established in Naples and carried on a flourishing trade in competition with the merchants of other nations. They were also established in Sicily, as is evident from the letters patent of Charles II authorizing the Catalonians to form colonies and appoint consuls in the island.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, we find that while the Aragonese adventurers were fighting at the head of Angevine troops, the merchants of Mallorca were transporting into the Mediterranean cities the wines of Calabria, the walnuts and chestnuts of Principat, and the grains of Apulia. They also visited regularly the ports of Ischia, Gaeta, Tarentum, and Manfredonia.<sup>5</sup> The port of Mallorca, whose eco-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Yver, *Le commerce et les marchands dans l'Italie*, pp. 141 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

conomic resources had been developed early by the sturdy Moors, now possessed one of the most formidable merchant marines on the Mediterranean. Her sails numbered 360, with an aggregate of some 30,700 sailors. She traded with Italy, Rhodes, Egypt, Constantinople, and Flanders, exporting oil, cloth, and agricultural products in exchange for spices, gold, and slaves in great numbers. In the course of a brief period Mallorca grew in splendor and opulence. Palaces and mansions surrounded by vineyards and gardens studded the city. It became the favorite habitation of wealthy merchants who more than any other class in society, not excepting the nobles and clergy, enjoyed the respect of the entire community.

With the annexation of Mallorca to Aragon in 1362, the prosperity of the city began to decline. The powerful combination of the merchants was broken. Then followed the wars with Sardinia which cost her 140 vessels valued at a million dollars. These catastrophies ruined the magnificent city of Mallorca and brought about the destruction of the wealth of the Jews and Christians alike. The utter ruin of the city was completed by the plagues, earthquakes, and inundations which visited her successively; and thus disappeared one of the most formidable rivals of the Italians in the commerce of the Levant.<sup>1</sup>

By 1389, a quarter of a century before the Italians, the Spaniards of Catalonia obtained a *fondaco* in Bruges. Finally their trading-posts at foreign shores increased so greatly that the Spanish consuls, many of whom were eminent jurists and trained experts in commerce and finance, not only protected the varied interests of their own countrymen but also acted as mercantile agents for the merchants of other countries which had no representation at these stations.

The rapid advance of Spanish maritime commerce was in great measure due to the cultivation of the art of chart-making. The Catalonians surpassed all other nations in this art. They made a careful study of coast navigation. They corrected the charts of Norway, Sweden, and the Baltic coast, and were the first to describe accurately the Peninsula of Denmark.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 230 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

Mention has been made in passing of the trade between Spain and Flanders. Regarding the origin of this commerce there is much speculation. It is very probable, however, that the first contact of Spain with Flanders was the result of a military expedition which the latter country undertook in 1147 in co-operation with England and France to aid the king of Portugal in his struggle with the Saracens.<sup>1</sup> A second possibility is that the Flemish pilgrims who were wont at this time to visit the shrine of St. Jacques de Compostelle in Galicia prepared the way for trade between the two countries.<sup>2</sup> There is very little doubt that these pilgrims took with them a certain amount of merchandise to sell or trade on the way in order to defray the expenses of their journey. They must have done likewise on their return, and thus an exchange of goods took place between Flanders and Spain. The pilgrims took either the sea or the land routes. Starting from northern France they went to Bordeaux, thence to Pampeluna, and finally to St. Jacques, by way of Burgos.<sup>3</sup> Precisely this same route was followed by the Flemish merchants who visited Spain in the fourteenth century,<sup>4</sup> when the Spaniards in their turn were permitted to have a consul at Bruges.

There is some documentary evidence of the presence of Spanish merchants in Flanders in the middle of the thirteenth century. From these documents it is clear that they visited the fairs in Flanders and were numerous enough to get a favorable hearing of their petitions against the abuses of trade.<sup>5</sup> Within a few years the Spanish and Portuguese merchants became powerful enough to act as agents for foreign trades at Bruges.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the evidence of this trade, however, is to be found in the records of piracy which was at its height at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Capmany as quoted by Finot cites an

<sup>1</sup> Finot, *Relations commerciales entre la Flanders et l'Espagne*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> It seems that the first pilgrim to Spain was Adalard, who in 1120 was attacked on his way by highwaymen. Here he vowed to found a hospital for travelers on reaching Spain if his life were spared. His wish was granted and he remained true to his vow.—*Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Finot, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 218.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

instance in 1323 when some Spanish merchants sailing toward Flanders were attacked and their ships and goods confiscated by English corsairs.<sup>1</sup> Despite these dangers, a number of Spanish merchants had established themselves in Flanders early in the century and enjoyed special royal privileges under Robert of Bethune.<sup>2</sup> These favors were extended in 1367 and again in 1384.<sup>3</sup> During the latter part of the thirteenth century there had been Spanish merchants in Ypres and Ghent exporting goods to Spain.<sup>4</sup> But piracy proved a grave menace to this Flemish trade. Finally, in 1350, the traffic received an abrupt check when a Spanish merchant fleet of forty galleys was attacked by English pirates in the Channel and the goods confiscated. This episode has given rise to endless disputes as to the responsibility of one or the other nation in the matter. But at least it seems clear that all the Spanish ships were carrying merchandise and were unarmed at the time, while the English vessels were well armed and fully prepared for battle.<sup>5</sup> After this event, a treaty of commerce was concluded between England and Spain and for twenty years neither nation interfered with the trade of the other.<sup>6</sup>

But already disintegration of Spanish commerce in Flanders had started. The Spanish traders began to migrate from Flanders. There were many reasons for this migration. In the first place the Black Death in 1360 had decimated the population and the traders were afraid to stay in the stricken cities. Secondly Flanders was preparing for a war with France and in order to strengthen her military position she had been obliged to levy excessively heavy taxes on Bruges and other large cities, thus discouraging trade in general. Lastly, as an inducement to the Spanish exodus, the Peace of Bretigny signed between France and England freed the

<sup>1</sup> Finot, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 210.

<sup>5</sup> Finot, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 ff. In this connection it is well to observe that at this time England under Edward I was striving for the control of the sea. As an effective means of asserting his authority, Edward I levied exorbitant tolls on the traffic through the English Channel. The fact, therefore, that Edward I was with the fleet which attacked the Spanish merchants tends to support the inference that the object of the Englishmen was not piracy but to enforce the payment of these tolls.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

seas from the pirates of both nations and made safe the transportation of the wealth which the Spaniards had accumulated.<sup>1</sup>

By way of conclusion a few of the more salient points in this cursory survey of Spanish commerce and industry may now be indicated.

From what has been said it becomes evident that in a time of peace, agriculture developed to a large extent, stimulated especially by territorial expansions, the emancipation of the servile class and the building-up of home industries. The beginning of the thirteenth century already found industries spread throughout the peninsula. The progress in agriculture and industry was not, however, uniform throughout the country, owing to great differences in the soil and climate of the various regions. Consequently, in many cases production was limited to local needs and in some instances imports were necessary to supplement local production. Finally it must be noted that even under the most favorable economic conditions, prosperity was confined within very narrow limits and was enjoyed by the upper classes in society. The lower strata of the community, weighed down for the most part by exactions of tithes and services, led a wretched existence and often resorted to outright revolt to free themselves from economic bondage.<sup>2</sup>

The second point to be noted is that concerning the political organization of Spain. It will be observed that at no time during the period under discussion was Spain united under a single ruler. The country was divided into several small kingdoms. There was no national unity among her people. As a result of this, each kingdom imposed heavy duties on the imports from the neighboring kingdoms and thereby hindered the free movement of commerce. Whereas under a united political organization one region might have supplied the wants of another, under the then existing arrangement this was not possible. So we do not find Spain at this time presenting a united front against foreign competition. On the contrary, there is sufficient proof of the fact that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 211-12.

in the latter part of the thirteenth century, foreign merchants established in Spain carried on a profitable trade by importing goods from their native countries.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, it is interesting to note the economic policy which guided the people of this time. The first care of the kings of Spain was to find new sources of revenue for the royal treasury. They were at the same time conscious of the necessity of encouraging the commerce and industry of their dominions. Out of these apparently conflicting interests grew the two irreconcilable economic systems: the one, an extreme protection, and the other, a heavy taxation of local commerce and industry. For the consistently narrow economic policy of protection Barcelona led all the rest of Spain. Protection was extended to everything that was produced at home. It has already been pointed out that Barcelona was the first city under James of Aragon to resort to navigation acts to build up her merchant marine. But protection did not stop with this. As late as 1491 the sale of foreign manufactures of cloth was absolutely prohibited in Barcelona.<sup>2</sup> In the case of commodities which were not produced in Catalonia, no protection was offered. That is to say, Barcelona does not seem to have applied protection with a view to *create* new industries, but mainly to raise revenue and to protect those already in existence. Thus the importation of grain was encouraged by every means and its exportation strictly prohibited. As a result of this policy, Barcelona came to be the granary of the surrounding regions. She was always provided against any emergency touching food supply.

Along with this narrow economic policy were very strong tendencies on the part of the government of a purely paternalistic character. Notwithstanding the encouragement given to private initiative, the government took a very active part in promoting the welfare of the land. The public improvements carried out by James of Aragon and Alfonso X and the establishment of consulates at foreign ports are clear instances of this tendency. As a further evidence of the benevolent attitude of the rulers of Spain toward their subjects, the laws of Alfonso X may be referred to. In one of them are to be found certain precepts to be followed by a good

<sup>1</sup> Altamira, *op. cit.*, II, 211-212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

king who has the welfare of his kingdom at heart. Another law, passed in 1281, exempts articles of necessity and the tools of artisans from taxation.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of protection and governmental aid to industry, heavy tariffs were interposed at every point and proved to be almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of commercial advance. As a rule, no one—not even among the plebeians or the clergy—was exempt from local taxes. Not only were tolls levied on the town frontiers and along the coasts but heavy excise duties were imposed on articles of necessity. In addition to these tariffs there were the government monopolies, such as of salt and fisheries,<sup>2</sup> and the taxes on sales, which had a blighting effect on commerce. Probably, however, nothing was so vicious and nothing had such distressing results as the frequent practice of prohibiting the sale of grain from the lands of individual lay farmers until after the entire product from the lands of the clergy had been disposed of.<sup>3</sup> Further, there were grave discriminations in favor of one city as against another within the same kingdom. A favoritism of this nature destroyed the cloth manufactures of the city of Ampurias, the pretext of the government being that the goods did not conform to the size and color prescribed by law and that the city did not employ inspectors. Finally, the governmental regulation of wages, hours of labor, and terms of contract did much at this time to render industrial and commercial ventures uncertain and hazardous.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.